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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PRISTINA 000518

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KCRM](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [KDEM](#) [UNMIK](#) [YI](#)
SUBJECT: SECURITY HEIGHTENED IN NORTH AFTER SERB
MUNICIPALITIES FURTHER REDUCE TIES WITH PRISTINA

REF: A. PRISTINA 484

[1](#)B. PRISTINA 495

Classified By: CDA KIRK MCBRIDE FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY. Municipal assemblies in all three of Kosovo's northern Serb-majority municipalities have passed resolutions calling for a cessation of existing minimal ties with the central government in Pristina. The resolutions express dissatisfaction with the Kosovo Police Service (KPS) and call for the return of Serbian police officers to address what municipal leaders consider to be a deteriorating security situation. The number of Serbian police officers operating illegally in the north has increased, as has the presence of KFOR, KPS and international police officers. Despite the declarations, some low level cooperation between northern municipalities and the PISG continues as usual. END SUMMARY.

NORTHERN MUNICIPALITIES CUT TIES TO PRISTINA

[1](#)2. (SBU) On June 2, Zvecan became the first of Kosovo's three northern Serb-majority municipalities to pass a resolution ceasing all contacts and connections with Pristina's Provisional Institutions of Self Government (PISG) (Ref A). Zubin Potok and Leposavic passed almost identical resolutions on June 13 and 14, respectively. The resolutions cite a deteriorating security environment and blame the Kosovo Police Service (KPS), particularly regional and investigative units, (i.e. those that contain ethnic Albanians) for failing to solve crimes against Kosovo Serbs. The resolutions ask the UN for protection and request the official return of Serbian Ministry of Interior (MUP) police officers. The resolutions inconsistently say KPS investigative units will not be allowed back into the north until recent crimes are solved.

SECURITY FORCES INCREASED IN THE NORTH

13. (SBU) The international community in Kosovo has long tacitly tolerated the presence of illegal, un-uniformed MUP officers, along with other Serbian government-run and financed parallel institutions. UNMIK Civil Police (CIVPOL) Regional Commander Gary Smith told E/P Chief and PolOff on June 15 that based on his own rough estimate, the number of MUP officers operating in northern Kosovo has increased from approximately 360 to about around 450 in the past week. He said the majority of Kosovo Serb KPS officers in the north also receive salaries both from the KPS and from the MUP.

14. (SBU) USOP officers observed a more visible security presence in the north, including KFOR on the streets and a KPS unit on the secondary bridge into north Mitrovica at the Bosniak Mahalla. In response to ongoing security concerns KFOR recently reopened a former Belgian base in Leposavic (Septel). Smith said that out of 81 Kosovo Serbs who graduated from the KPS school on June 10, 54 have been assigned to the north Mitrovica KPS station for accelerated field training.

15. (SBU) Smith said that in response to Police Commissioner Kai Vittrup's promise to municipal leaders to deploy 500 CIVPOL officers to the north, Smith has received an enhancement force of approximately 72 officers. He said 16 German officers and at least 25 Americans will be coming soon. Previously there were approximately 150 CIVPOL officers assigned to the north, plus 350 special unit officers who provide support and are trained for riot control.

16. (SBU) Smith said 36 former MUP officers -- including 19 Kosovo Albanians, 14 Kosovo Serbs, two Bosniaks and one Ashkali -- have been selected from over 400 applicants to

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participate in an accelerated four-week conversion course from MUP to KPS scheduled to begin on June 19. In a stark deviation from the previous mandatory requirement that all new KPS officers take a 20 week training course together at the multi-ethnic KPS school in Vushtri/Vucitern, the 14 Kosovo Serbs will take the course at the KPS station in north Mitrovica (with OSCE trainers from the KPS school); while the others will take the course at the KPS school. Senior American CIVPOL officers voiced concern to INLRep about the deviations from the standard program mandated by Vittrup.

KOSOVO SERBS ARE PRIME SUSPECTS IN RECENT CRIMES

17. (C) Smith said that Kosovo Serbs are considered prime suspects for three of the recent incidents in Zvecan claimed by several Serb leaders to be terrorist acts by Kosovo Albanians, including the murder of Kosovo Serb Miljan Veskovic on June 1, the shooting at a gas station on May 11, and the shooting at the vehicle being driven by a Serbian Orthodox priest on May 6. Smith said CIVPOL has evidence that the same weapon was involved in both the murder of Veskovic and the gas station shootings, and said the KPS has suspended a Kosovo Serb KPS officer for shooting at the priest's vehicle. (Ref B). He also said that the bullet that hit a Kosovo Serb woman in the Serb village of Priluzje Vushtri/Vucitern municipality) on June 5 hit her shoulder vertically from the sky, giving credence to the theory that it originated from a wedding celebration in a nearby Kosovo Albanian village. Smith added that CIVPOL is providing 24/7 close protection for six months for one KPS MUP officer who alleges that he refused to comply with an order from the northern Kosovo MUP commander to commit three murders.

DECLARATIONS WERE LOCAL INITIATIVES

18. (SBU) Regional representative of the Kosovo Coordination Center (CCK) Momir Kasalovic told E/P Chief and PolOff on June 15 that the municipal assembly declarations were purely

local initiatives in response to crimes acts against Kosovo Serbs. Kasalovic said Belgrade officials support the declarations, but did not initiate them. Acting UNMIK Regional Representative Joe Kazlas and Smith both believe that E.O.-listed hard-line leaders of the Serbian National Council (SNC) Milan Ivanovic, deputy president of the Zvecan Assembly, and Marko Jaksic, a member of the Zubin Potok assembly, were behind the declarations.

¶9. (SBU) After initial reports that Zvecan had cut ties with both the PISG and UNMIK, Jaksic and others quickly clarified that the cessation of ties was with the PISG only. Kasalovic blamed the confusion on an erroneous translation, saying that Serbs everywhere learned from Milosevic the disastrous consequences of cutting ties with the international community.

¶10. (SBU) Kasalovic agreed that the northern municipalities have minimal ties with the PISG to cut, and said that the main impact is that the municipalities will no longer accept funding from the PISG. According to Senior UNMIK political advisor Andrei Efimov no money was scheduled to be transferred this week, and therefore none was rejected. Kazlas and Efimov both said that some low level administrative and financial cooperation between the northern municipalities and the PISG has continued despite the declarations. On June 14 the Leposavic municipal director of finance and economy and two north Mitrovica Serbs employed by the UN on municipal issues attended a USAID-funded and PISG Ministry of Finance and Economy-sponsored budget training workshop in the Mitrovica municipal building located in ethnic-Albanian south Mitrovica.

¶11. (U) Post clears this message in its entirety for release to Special Envoy Ahtisaari.

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